



Mark Cumming [REDACTED]
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To Consultation/DTF@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Submission to review

Please find attached my submission for the fire services review.

Regards

Mark Cumming
Station Officer
Country Fire Authority

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Dear Assistant Clerk Committees,

INQUIRY INTO THE FIREFIGHTERS PRESUMPTIVE COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2017

1. I am
 - Mark Cumming
 - Station Officer
 - Country Fire Authority
 - Employed by CFA since 2003
 - Ground Observer (Wildfire)
 - Air Observer (Wildfire)
 - Steep Angle Rope Rescue Operator
 - Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations)
 - Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations)

2. I currently live in Diamond Creek, and work at the South Morang Fire Station

3. Until 2010, I was a CFA volunteer since I was 16 years old, and my family have always been involved in CFA so I have essentially grown up always being involved with CFA.

4. I am writing this submission in support of proposed fire service reforms for the following reasons:
 - The areas covered by CFA have grown substantially over the years, and continue to do so as is seen in the recent census data. It is vital for our safety and that of the community that we protect that we are able to respond a sufficient number of firefighters and appliances in a timely manner. Unfortunately, this is not the case at the moment in CFA areas, due to the following
 - i. The number of incidents in these areas has increased dramatically and is placing too much strain on volunteers and the time they have to commit to training and fire calls
 - ii. Access to the fire stations in CFA urban areas is hampered by heavy traffic, making getting to the station and responding a truck in 4 minutes near impossible at times
 - Having two trucks with a minimum of 7 firefighters will ensure that when I send two of my crew inside a burning building, I know that I have rescue crew available should the worst happen and they need help. At the moment, even when a volunteer crew respond, there is no requirement or guarantee that they will all have the appropriate qualifications for structural firefighting.
 - The reform will assist with standardisation of CFA and MFB career fire-fighters in terms of training, and also greatly improve operations and efficiency in Victoria's busiest fire response areas
 - The reform will have no impact on the operations of CFA volunteers. They will still respond to all the fires as they have in the past, but now with the guarantee that if

they cannot get a full crew, or cannot turnout in the required 4 minutes, that an adequate and safe response is still being provided to the community.

5. Below I have provided some examples of my experiences that demonstrate how the system is currently failing:

- 29/06/2017 Gas Leak – Doreen.
 - Major growth suburb in Melbourne, covered by local CFA brigade
 - Three brigades responded (South Morang Staff, Doreen Volunteer and Yarrambat Volunteer)
 - South Morang respond within 90 seconds with 4 FF
 - Yarrambat did not respond at all
 - Doreen responded after 10 minutes, with one (1) person on the truck, who was not able to wear breathing apparatus
 - Time from 000 call to fire truck arriving 11 – 12 minutes.
 - If this situation escalated, I did not have sufficient crew to perform tasks safely. If this had been a building fire, not only would the fire have spread due to the slow response time, but we would not have sufficient crew to safely enter the building and attack the fire / rescue anyone inside.
- 2013 House Fire – Diamond Creek
 - Three brigades responded (Eltham Staff, Diamond Creek volunteer and Plenty volunteer)
 - Insufficient crew on Diamond Creek pumper resulted in their Incident controller, who should be in charge of the incident and remain outside overseeing things like safety, fire operations and tactics, wearing breathing apparatus and entering the burning building.
 - This fact was not communicated to the Eltham crew on site
 - Due to no safety information being relayed to myself and my FF inside the burning building, the tile roof collapsed on us.
 - We fortunately received minor injuries, and were both transported to hospital for observation and treatment.
 - If this fire scene was properly resourced in the critical first minutes of the fire, the Incident Controller would have seen from outside that the roof was unsafe and relayed this to the internal crews so we could withdraw to safety. Unfortunately, due to slow response and limited volunteer numbers, this didn't happen and the results could have been a lot more serious. We got lucky that day.
 - After 10 – 15 minutes, we had a number of volunteers arrive to assist with operations. I see that this demonstrates that CFA volunteers will still be utilised under the proposed new structure, whilst ensuring safety of firefighter and the public in the critical early stages of the fire or emergency

These examples are in no way isolated, and are something that we have to deal with on a daily basis. This is in no way a negative reflection on our volunteers, however in a number of areas of Victoria, they are overwhelmed by the call volume and training requirements that are required to meet the risk.

I hope my submission gives you some information and insight into how things are operating currently in CFA and how these reforms are of great benefit to both firefighters and the community.

If you would like any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely